

REMARKS

Applicants reply to the Office Action dated December 23, 2009 within three months. The Examiner objects to pending claims 2, 11, 12, 15, 18-21 and 23-25 as having allowable subject matter but depending from a rejected base claim. The Examiner rejects pending claims 1, 9-10, 13, 16-17 and 22. Applicants cancel claims 12 and 21 without prejudice to filing one or more claims having similar subject matter in other applications. Support for the amendments may be found in the originally-filed specification, claims, and figures. No new matter has been introduced by these new claims. Applicants assert that the application is in condition for allowance and reconsideration of the pending claims is requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejects 1, 9-10, 13, 16-17 and 22 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gullotta (U.S. Patent No. 6,985,955) and Muhlestien (U.S. Patent Application No. 2003/0195942) in view of Steegmans (U.S. Patent No. 6,799,216). Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's rejections; however, Applicants amend certain pending claims, without prejudice or disclaimer, to further clarify the patentable aspects and to expedite prosecution.

Specifically, the Examiner identifies that the subject matter of claims 12 and 21 is allowable if the claims were re-written in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. As such, Applicants amend claims 1 and 17 as suggested by the Examiner to include the patent subject matter of claims 12 and 21 in claims 1 and 17, respectively. Further, Applicants appreciate that the Examiner recognizes the patentability of the subject matter of claim 12 and as such, Applicants incorporate the subject matter of claim 12 in claim 16. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1, 16, and 17 contain the allowable subject matter the Examiner has identified and respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection discussed above.

Furthermore, claims 2, 9-11, 13, 15, 18-20, 22-25 variously depend from independent claims 1 and 17. As such, Applicants assert that claims 2, 9-11, 13, 15, 18-20, 22-25 are differentiated from the cited references for the same reasons as set forth above, in addition to their own novel features. Thus, Applicants respectfully request allowance of all pending claims.

When a phrase similar to "at least one of A, B, or C" or "at least one of A, B, and C" is used in the claims, Applicants intend the phrase to mean any of the following: (1) at least one of A; (2) at least one of B; (3) at least one of C; (4) at least one of A and at least one of B; (5) at least one of B

and at least one of C; (6) at least one of A and at least one of C; or (7) at least one of B, and at least one of C.

Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. **19-2814**. If an extension of time is necessary, please accept this as a petition therefore. Applicants invite the Office to telephone the undersigned if the Examiner has any questions regarding this Reply or the present application in general.

Respectfully submitted,

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